



Club, wahaika form

On display

Title/Description: Club, wahaika form

Born: 1700 - 1799

Object Type: Implement

Materials: Wood

Measurements: h. 375 x w. 40 x d. 130 mm

Accession Number: 186

Historic Period: 18th century

Production Place: New Zealand, North Island, Northland, Oceania, Pacific

Cultural Group: Māori

Credit Line: Donated by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1973

In traditional times the Maori warrior carried two basic weapons, one a short club, the other a longer two-handed weapon of the quarter-staff type. Several varieties of each type were developed, together with skilful techniques in close combat, much as formerly applied in European sword and knife fighting. There were also honourable conventions respecting combat and the proper method of despatching an enemy, which with short weaponry involved a thrusting blow to the opponent's temple with the distal end of the weapon. All varieties of short club, whether of wood, stone or bone, have a sharp spatulate blade for this purpose. The handle of these clubs is invariably pierced for a flax wrist cord, which prevented the weapon's loss during combat.

The present fine example is of the *wahaika* 'billhook' form, which usually has a small figure carved above the grip, and also a head as the butt terminal, typically with gaping mouth and tongue extended in the Maori gesture of defiance and challenge. In many areas of Polynesia clubs were carved as a modified human image, and thus besides being shaped for technical efficiency were also designed to enshrine the productive and destructive powers of deified ancestors.

Steven Hooper, 1997

Entry taken from *Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Collection, Vol. 2: Pacific, African and Native North American Art*, edited by Steven Hooper (Yale University Press, 1997) p. 12.

Provenance

Acquired by the Sainsbury Family in 1972. Donated to the Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia in 1973 as part of the original gift.
